



THOUGHTS

O N

A Question of Importance

PROPOSED

To the PUBLIC,

*Whether is it probable that the Immense
Extent of Territory acquired by this
Nation at the late Peace, will operate
towards the Prosperity, or the Ruin of
the Island of Great-Britain?*

L O N D O N :

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MCCCLXV.

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THOUGHTS

ON THE

STATE OF

THE REPUBLIC

OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE YEAR 1793

BY

JOHN ADAMS

ESQ.

OF THE MASSACHUSETTS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

NEW-YORK

PRINTED BY

JOHN ADAMS

AT THE SIGN OF THE

LIBERTY BELL

IN THE CITY OF

NEW-YORK

T O

Esq;
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
for the COUNTY of
_____.

S I R,

*AFTER the repeated Victories
gained over the Minority, it is sup-
posed that the two Houses of Par-
liament, and particularly that of the Com-
mons, which hath nothing to do as a Court
of*

of Judicature, will employ themselves in concerting Measures for promoting the Good of the Nation. You ought to lose no Time in falling about this Work ; for a quiet Interval, such as you now enjoy, is very rare in Countries where there is so much Liberty as we have at present; neither can it be expected to last long. This is the best Excuse that can be made for Ministers of State doing so little for the Public Benefit among us. The Duration of their Power is so uncertain, and its Extent so limited, even while they possess it, that few Designs of general Utility can be either projected or carried into Execution while it continues.

Your present Opportunity therefore is the more precious, and I hope will not be altogether lost. It is very probable, however, that with the best Intentions in the World, you may be misled. Proposals for new Laws will probably be made and supported

parted chiefly by those who have particular Interest in them ; and this may be done with so much Plausibility as to deceive Persons of the best understanding. With great Humility, therefore, I submit the Thoughts in the following Tract to Your Consideration, and that of the Publick. They arise from Attachment to no Party, and, so far as I can perceive, to no particular Interest. They have been generated by Reading and Reflexion on the History of other Nations, and a good deal of Attention paid to the Causes of Prosperity or Decay in several Cities and Counties of this Kingdom. I have generally found, that Bodies of Men, as well as private Persons, were incessantly pursuing after Things which proved prejudicial to them, after they had attained them. And in many Cases it was easy to see, after some Years Experience, that the Prosperity of Societies had been owing, in a great Measure, to a Circumstance or two, which all the while they were groaning under, and

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crying out against as an intolerable Grievance.

Filled with Reflections of this Kind, I leave you to judge what were my Sentiments of the violent Clamours against the late Peace. I began to think what Dominions the King of Great Britain now had, and what use he had for any more; and was soon led into a strong Suspicion, that, instead of having too little Land, he had by far too much. Whether in prosecuting those Reflections I have carried the Matter too great a Length, I shall not say, as we are all ready to run into Extremes. But one Thing is certain; that the Basis of all Deliberation on our Connection with the Colonies abroad, ought to be Not — how will they bring the greatest immediate Wealth into the Coffers of a few Merchants? Or how will they bring the greatest immediate Splendor to the City of London? — But how will they

*they continue to promote the Population of
the Island, and the Industry of the People of
Great Britain ?*

*I sincerely wish you a good Session of
Parliament, and am,*

S I R,

Your most obedient

Humble Servant,

C A T O.

THE [illegible] OF [illegible]
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THOUGHTS

ON A

QUESTION, &c.

Whether is it probable that the Immense Extent of Territory acquired by this Nation at the late Peace, will operate towards the Prosperity, or the Ruin of the Island of Great-Britain?

I Have proposed this Question to the Public, because, after thinking upon it a good deal in the most cool and dispassionate Manner, my own Opinion is still, in a great Measure, undetermined. Let no Man imagine it is a Political or Party Question. I believe the Ministers of State, in negotiating the late Peace, acted as wisely and sincerely as any who have been before them employed in the like Work ; subject however at the same

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time

time to the Errors and Prejudices which are inseparable from Humanity. I would not at this Moment give three Farthings, for my own particular Part, to determine which of the Parties, Majority or Minority should prevail. Neither do I think it is of any Importance to the Public, except in so far as every good Subject would wish, that His Majesty should partake a little of the Peace and Quiet which we so happily enjoy under his Government,

Having proposed the Question, no more should have been said upon it by me, were it not for the following Circumstance. Some perhaps who have given Credit to my Declaration, that it is not Politically intended, may still be so clear upon one Side, as to despise and count it Ridiculous. I shall therefore throw out a few general Reflections which have led me to look upon it, as, at least, Problematical; and I am sure if it be doubtful, no Man can deny that it is Important.

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The Territory acquired is so immense, that it must make the Time of Acquisition a remarkable *Æra* of this Government, and produce a great Change in our Situation and Circumstances as a Society. As the smallest Member of a Natural Body affects the whole in some Degree; so every one Circumstance with regard to a Political Body, has some Influence upon every other. A Nation must accommodate itself some way or other, well or ill, to the whole Extent of its Territory. The most distant and desolate Part of the Dominions of any People, has some Relation to them, either as a Benefit or Burthen; otherwise it is not their's. Hence it follows, that any Acquisition would have produced some Change; and therefore so great an Acquisition, and that made all at once, must produce a very great one.

Men have often conjectured wrong, perhaps they have seldom conjectured right, as to the Effects of great Changes in a State or Government, till they felt them by Experience. The Spanish Monarchy,

narchy, at the Time when it got Possession of the West Indies, was one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful and flourishing in Europe. Would not any Man at that Time have been reckoned disordered in his Judgment, who should have affirmed, that the Kingdom would be the worse for that Addition ; and particularly that it would become *poor* by Means of the *Gold* and *Silver* Mines ? Yet do we not know that it proved so in Fact ; and that there is not now any Man of the least Political Reflection, but can explain for what Reasons it was, and behoved to be so ? That solemn People believed that they should possess all Things without working, because they had plenty of Gold, which they had always hitherto seen sufficient to Purchase all Things. They only forgot, that as they could neither eat nor wear Gold, they must necessarily pay to such as would work for them, just in Proportion to the Abundance of Gold they possessed. Thus their Stock was soon exhausted, and would have been so, perhaps sooner, if it had been a thousand times greater than

than it was. When either a Person or People are ruined by *too much* of any thing that is good in a moderate Degree, the greater the Quantity, their Ruin comes on so much the more speedily*.

I know it will be said (and perhaps every Reader is before-hand with me in thinking it) “ We have not got more
Money”

* It is probable this Observation will appear somewhat strange to many, because it is a little out of the common Road. But if they will reflect with Attention and Accuracy, they will find it conclusive in point of Reasoning, and confirmed by Experience, in innumerable Instances. Remember, the Supposition is, that the Excess is prejudicial; now does it not follow that the greater the Excess, the greater the Prejudice? Try this on every Subject, and it will be found to hold. If a man is tempted to Luxury, Softness, and Indulgence, by an affluent Fortune; the greater the Fortune, the more whimsical, extravagant, and endless his Desires. If a man happens to get more Applause than he is able to bear, the greater Quantity of Incense you offer to him, the sooner is his Head turned, and the greater is his Intoxication. If a General is incommoded in the Day of Battle by the very Numbers of his own Army, the greater the Multitude, the more inexpressible the Confusion; the more sudden and dreadful his Defeat.

Money to make us idle, but more Land, which we may have an Opportunity to improve." But I must beg leave to ask, Is any Man sure that it is not possible to get too much Land, as well as too much Money? We have now from the Gulph of Florida to the North-Pole, at least with very little Exception; how far West I really do not know. What pity is it that we did not keep the whole Island of Cuba, and by another Year's War, take from the Spaniards all their Possessions in South-America? After we had done so, there would have remained still some more of the Globe to conquer. Is not the Lust of Conquest in a Nation as insatiable as the Lust of Gold in a Miser? And is it not much more hurtful? If any thinks otherwise, if he either thinks we have not enough, or not more than enough at present, let him explain clearly the Reasons of his Opinion, and what will be the probable Effect of the Acquisition upon the Society.

There is the greater need of Accuracy in this Matter, that I believe the
Event

Event, taking in all its Circumstances, is quite singular, the like never having happened before. Some Nations formerly have in the Course of a few Years, conquered great Tracts of Country; but they ordinarily obtained new Subjects as well as new Ground: Whereas our late Acquisition may be justly called mere Earth. Nay, though we had all that the Indians possess behind, as which we shall very soon have, it will be the same Thing; for they seem upon the Eve of either dwindling into nothing of themselves, or being exterminated by us†.

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† The Severities exercised upon the Indians, have certainly given much pain to Princes of humanity, among us, who hear of them, as they appear to have given to several of our Officers who were obliged by their Orders to commit them. The great absurdity of them in point of Policy will plainly appear, by comparing the State of these People with our own. There are three great Stages in the Progress of human Society. The First is, the Savage State, in which Men subsist by Hunting, and need by far the greatest Quantity of Ground. The Second, the Pastoral Life; which needs considerably less.

Has it not been long ago agreed upon by Persons of Reason and Observation, that it is not the Extent of a Country, but the Number of Inhabitants in proportion to its Extent, that constitutes the Strength of a Nation? If I am not mistaken, it used to be affirmed in some such Proportion as this, that supposing ten Millions of People to inhabit one Country, and the same Number to inhabit another of double the Extent, the first State would be four times as powerful as the last. Is this Maxim now found

less than the former, but still a good deal.—And the Last, is that of Agriculture and Commerce, which needs least of all. Now the Indians are in the first State; we are in the last; and yet we are never satisfied, but still driving them into Corners, and obliging them to cede vast Tracts, which are necessary to them, and which possessed by them, might be of some use to us, but which without them can be of no Service to us at all. This Cruelty however, it will be said, tho' undesirable, was necessary, because they would not let us alone. It is impossible to believe it. No Briton at this Time hath so much to say with them as Sir William Johnson; and it is evident he acquired his Influence, not by Cruelty, but by Honesty and Mercy.

found to be false? Or, on what Account is it not applicable to our Case? If we take Great-Britain and its Colonies as one Body, I do not see what should hinder it to be applied. If we take them as separate Bodies in Alliance, from which Alliance we in this Nation hitherto derived great Advantages, I acknowledge it in Part. But my Question still remains; will these endless Tracts of Ground, in future Times, fill this Kingdom with Inhabitants, or depopulate it?

First, let us suppose Great-Britain and its Colonies as one Society.

I am very sensible that a Situation can be supposed, and that many Nations have been in such a Situation, as that occupying waste Grounds has tended to increase both their Number and Strength. It increases their Number without Question, because when the Means of Subsistence are made easy, the common People are encouraged to marry. But before it can increase their Strength, I

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apprehend two Conditions are essentially requisite. 1st. That the Land they have already be fully stocked, and likely to continue so. If this is not the Case, the Migration is unnecessary at least, if not hurtful. 2d. There is another Condition, not so commonly thought of, necessary to a People's increasing in Strength by settling more Land. What I mean is, that there be a plain and simple Taste of Life, so that Agriculture may support them comfortably. This was the Case with the Romans in the early Times of their Republick, as well as many other antient Nations. Now it must be considered, that they had very little either of Commerce or Manufactures; so that they soon became not only full, but overstocked; and having nothing but the Fruits of their own Ground to support them, they were obliged to send Colonies abroad. These Colonies went not to seek Wealth, but Food. So simple was their Taste of Life, that in the beginning of the Roman State, a Family was decently maintained upon one Acre
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and a Quarter of an Acre English. When Appius Clausus left the Sabines, he brought with him to Rome five thousand Sabine Families, to each of whom the above Quantity was assigned, and that Great Man had the immense Estate of fifteen Acres given to himself. How different from the late Grants of American Lands ?

Let us carefully remember therefore, that it must be Manufacture and Commerce only, which can make a People numerous and prosperous, after Elegance and Luxury have been once introduced. Now it is at least very doubtful, whether a narrow be not more favourable than an extended Territory for their Advancement. There is less Necessity either of Manufactures or Commerce in an extended Territory, because the Multitude of common People, by whose Hands National Industry must be carried on, can easily find Support without them : Whereas when they are confined to their own Bounds, those who cannot be Husbandmen, are obliged to be Artificers.

I believe Experience will confirm this Observation, whether we consider the State of Mankind in antient or modern Times.

But let us now suppose our Colonies separate Bodies in Alliance with us. It will probably be thought that these Settlements growing in Numbers, in the same Manner and from the same Causes, that all new planted Colonies do, their Commerce, which is confined to us, must be of great Benefit to this Island. And no doubt if they be serviceable at all, this is the single Light in which they can be so to us. How far they have been so hitherto, I do not enquire; but whether they will continue to be so, or not, seems to me very uncertain, for several Reasons.

1. They seem to threaten us with an Evil, not only dangerous or troublesome, but ruinous, viz. Depopulation. Settling small Colonies may do such Services as to Counterballance an inconsiderable Loss of People; but settling vast Tracts
may

may exhaust the Mother Country, and prove Destruction. Letting a little Blood may be not only harmless, but serviceable to the Body; and yet excessive Bleeding will kill as certainly as any Disease, to which it is liable. I shall not spend Time in enumerating the various Ways in which our Colonies drain us of People. Men of Rank or Wealth, who have obtained Grants of Lands, spare no pains to inveigle them away in Crowds to settle their several Possessions, because without People these Possessions are good for nothing. Multitudes go away of their own accord, allured by the enchanting Prospect of Wealth; and either never return at all, or return in a frail diseased State, unfit for Propagation. We suffer no inconsiderable Loss in the many thousands of Seamen and Soldiers, which must now be sent to all Parts of the known World, to annoy our Enemies in Time of War, and to protect our Friends in Time of Peace. If all the Men who died an untimely Death by Sicknefs, Famine or the Sword, in the Havannah Expedition, had been
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employed in some useful Occupation in Great Britain, they and their Posterity, would have been of greater Benefit to this Nation, than any two Islands in the West-Indies.

The farther Investigation of this I leave to every Reader, that he may compute the Numbers in his own Mind. Let me only observe, that in Proportion as the Number of Hands is lessened, the Price of Labour, and the first Cost of our exported Commodities must be increased; at the very same Time the Quantity of these Commodities must decrease, and the Gain upon them centering here, must be diminished by the two concurring Causes. If therefore a Trade to our foreign Plantations be highly profitable, we ought to be the more concerned, lest by driving the Matter too far, we leave next to no-body at home to trade with them. Every thing may be Evidence. Many a Gentleman has laid out so much Money in building an elegant Palace, that he has left himself no
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Estate on which he might possess and enjoy it.

2. The Advantage is in Danger of being lost another Way. Our Plantations are becoming so extensive, that it is probable they will speedily set up Manufactures of their own, and be our Rivals instead of our Customers. This Effect will be accelerated by the Circumstance formerly mentioned. Our Commodities will not be sufficient in Quantity for them to consume, and they will be too costly for them to purchase. That this must be the Case in some future Period, from the natural Course of Things, many Writers have confessed; but they have generally considered it as at a very great Distance, and therefore unworthy of Attention. There are however at this Time many Symptoms of its being much nearer than we apprehended.

The only Thing by which it is retarded, is, that as Land is cheap in America, and Labour dear, it is a more immediate

diate and sure Way for a Family to get Bread by cultivating the Ground, than by fabricating Goods, which may be brought on easy Terms from Great-Britain. But this will soon be at an End, both from the Numbers of People settled in Places near the Sea, and from the unfatiable Avarice of the Proprietors of Land, who already begin rather to suffer their vast Possessions to lie waste, than part with them but at a very great Profit. The Truth is, I have some Suspicion that it has been at an End in several of our Colonies for some Time, and that nothing stands in the Way but the Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the first setting up of Manufactures in every Country. Whenever Interest or Necessity therefore shall overcome these Difficulties, it is easy to foresee what an amazing and rapid Progress will be made in every Branch of Business, by an enterprizing and industrious People.

Is there not also a Confirmation of this from Experience. If any Credit may
be

be given to our News-papers, many Tradesmen have of late gone from different Parts of the Kingdom to America. I think it was said no less than one hundred, of one Profession, from one Place, and at one Time§. It has also been affirmed, that several different Branches of Manufacture are already set up in New-England: And our Merchants at home (who, however little they understand of the Interest of the Public, understand their own immediate Interest well enough) are making dreadful outcries upon it. We are told it will be half a Million Sterling loss yearly to Great-Britain; and I can easily believe it will very soon be double that Sum. But what Remedy? Mention has been made of applying to Parliament to hinder the Exportation of Artificers. On which I must beg leave to ask, Will they go if it does not appear to be their Interest? And if it be their Interest, will you hinder them? Or if you would, how can you

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§ Stocking-Weavers, from Nottingham.

hinder them? I do not know whether the Parliament will pay any regard to these childish Complaints, or not; but I am sure that any Measures they could contrive for that purpose would be quite ineffectual.

3. I must examine another Circumstance in our Situation with regard to the Colonies; viz. Our exclusive Right to trade with them. It may be said, let them be as extensive as you please; let them set up as many Manufactures as they themselves please: Still their Trade will be valuable, and it is wholly confined to this Island, they are not permitted to carry on Business with any other Nation, but through the Medium of Great-Britain. But what signifies a Trade, if it come to be a losing Trade? And that, from some of the above Considerations, it may be sooner than we are aware of. Whenever they can supply themselves, with Manufactures they will have no need of us; most of the Luxuries and Delicacies of Life they can get nearer

nearer home from one another, and are indeed a kind of World in themselves.

Besides, I strongly suspect this Circumstance of our having an exclusive Right to trade with them, will operate slowly and silently indeed, but constantly, and at last fatally, to our own Prejudice. There is much selfishness in human Nature; and it will be, nay probably it has been, a Temptation to us not to make our Manufactures as good and as cheap as possible to procure voluntary Purchasers, because we think we can send them to those who are obliged to take them. Let no Man think this a slight Circumstance, or of no Moment. Baron Montesquieu has observed, in more places than one of his Spirit of Laws, that the moral Causes of the Thriving or Decay of a Nation, viz. such as arise from the Tempers or Principles of the People, the Spirit of their Constitution, or their Situation with regard to others, are unspeakably more powerful than occasional Causes, such as War, Famine and Pestilence; or their

Contraries. The Reason is plain---The Effect of those which he calls Moral Causes, tho' Impracticable, is *Universal* and *Perpetual*. If therefore our exclusive Right to trade to our own Plantations, tempts us to trust or lean too much to it, it may sink under the Weight, and prove the Cause of our Destruction.

I think I have observed it asserted frequently by political Writers, when railing against the Government, that the Ballance of Trade is against us to every Nation, or almost every Nation in the World, except our own Plantations. These Writers indeed are a sort of Witnesses, to whose Testimony the least Credit is to be given of any People under the Sun; for when it answers their Purpose, they will not stick to Assert not only the grossest, but the most manifest Falshoods, as if they were quite superior to any sense of Shame upon Detection. With Regard to this, in particular, I am pretty certain the Ballance cannot be against us to Spain and Portugal, because

because they have been already ruined in the very Way that I suspect our Ruin to be approaching. But if the Ballance be against us with other Nations, it is probable our Plantations themselves are the Cause of it, by shewing us an easy Way of making a considerable Profit, so that now we are not at so great Pains to Work as well and as cheap, and as much, as our Neighbours about us.

This is naturally followed by another dangerous Consequence of our exclusive Trade. Our Merchants will import from other Nations what they can export to the British Plantations with Advantage. Such Commodities passing through our Hands make a great Appearance of Commerce, and yet add next to nothing to our Strength or Numbers; and not so much to our Wealth as may perhaps be supposed. This shews how it is at least possible, that our Possessions may have the same Effect upon us, that the Conquest of Mexico and Peru had upon the Spaniards. We may slacken our own Industry,

try, and supply our Settlements by the Industry of others. Great Men and great Merchants who have Estates and Property abroad, may make a splendid Figure for a Time, while the Body of the Kingdom is gradually losing its Nourishment, and falling into an incurable Consumption.

An exclusive Trade is of far less Consequence than may be imagined. The Spirit of Commerce, says a late eminent Author, is of a very nice and delicate Nature—I add, it is of a very subtil and penetrating Nature. The Reason is the same for both. It is animated and conducted entirely by the Interest of Individuals : So that unless this happens to co-incide with the public good, one Part of the Nation must be indefatigable in bringing on the Ruin of the Whole. Wherever Interest leads, or seems to lead, Trade will force its Way over all Obstructions ; neither can it be almost by any Means forced to go another Way. We hear sometimes great Outcries against
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those mercenary Wretches, who, for the sake of private Gain, will suck the very Blood of the Poor, and riot in the Spoils of their Country.

Alas! you know little of Human Nature, if ever you expect to restrain the Plurality by such Arguments; or if you could hinder them from doing Ill, you will never make them do any Good. I remember not long ago, taking a Walk through the Streets of London, I was led to reflect what an endless Variety of Designs must be carried on uniformly to supply the Inhabitants of that vast City, with every Necessary, and every imaginable Conveniency of Life; and it immediately occurred, that nothing but mutual Interest could do it. Without this, ten thousand Legislators constantly employed could not devise the Means, and an hundred thousand Judges could not enforce the Execution. The Spirit of all Laws on the Police of a City, or the Commerce of a People, must be to make public and private Interest not
only

only really, but apparently and evidently the same.

Hence it follows, that an exclusive Trade preserved by Force against the Inclination of the People concerned, cannot be carried very far, and cannot continue very long. While we serve our Plantations as well as other People, we may expect they will chearfully trade with us : So soon as we either will not, or cannot do this, they will use every possible Means to be supplied from another Quarter. The Spaniards have an exclusive Trade to their own Settlements; and yet, if I am rightly informed, there are few Branches from which we derive greater Profit, than an illicit Trade forced at the Hazard both of Life and Fortune, from our West India Islands to the Spanish Main. There have been lately some hideous Complaints against our Commanders of King's Ships for not encouraging this Trade. Would these Complainers be pleased that the Parliament should open a free Trade to all
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the World to our Plantations? They would certainly burn or pull down that Member of Parliament's House who should move for it. Now I desire to know what an honest Man in Spain would think of the Equity of this Procedure?

It appears indeed, from what I have said above, that I do not expect much Equity from them, and therefore it is not upon that Side that I propose to press the Argument. It is from the side of Interest. If we are so partial to ourselves, as to trample upon every Law and every national Engagement, when we hope to do it with Impunity or Profit, why should we expect others to be more honest than ourselves, or that our Colonies will continue to trade with us longer than it is their Interest to do so? For this Reason we should bend all our Force to the Improvement of our own Country, by increasing the Number, Sobriety and Industry of its Inhabitants. If there be any Defect here, the most valuable Settlements will do us no good;

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and if there be a visible Disproportion between our Colonies and our Ability to trade with them, upon just and equal Terms, the more they are enlarged, the sooner shall we be destroyed.

As I have all along professed the greatest Regard for the Parliament and Ministry, it will be thought, perhaps, that we may, without much Concern, leave the Care of the Public to them. Some Admirers of modern Improvements are apt to speak in very high Terms of the Discernment of this enlightened Age, as it is called. Such, it is not impossible, may be ready to say, “ Great National Mistakes have indeed “ formerly been committed, but the “ Principles of Trade and Commerce, as “ well as Government, are now so well “ understood that they will not be repeated. While Individuals are pursuing their own Interest with unremitting Activity, the Legislature, ever watchful for the general Good, and presiding over the whole, will observe the first Appearance of any thing going “ against

“ against us, and take effectual Measures
 “ for turning it into its proper Channel.”
 But though I see no Reason for impeach-
 ing the Character of those who now
 compose the Legislation or Administra-
 tion, when compared with their Prede-
 cessors, yet it is uncertain whether they
 will endeavour, and more so, whether
 they will be able to prevent the injury
 we may suffer from unweildy Possessions.
 I have not built my Arguments upon the
 Treachery of particular Men, or even
 the Degeneracy of the present Age, but
 upon the Mistakes of Human Nature,
 and the *axum*, as it were, of our Con-
 stitution, to which we have been brought
 by the ordinary course of Things, and
 peculiar Disposition of Providence.

Bodies of Men, alas! are far from be-
 ing so clear-sighted, as they themselves
 imagine. Immediate and seeming, or
 particular Interests, have ordinarily so
 powerful an Effect on the most uncor-
 rupted Part of them, as bears down all
 other Considerations. How many Laws
 relating to Trade have been framed with a

sincere Intention to promote it, and yet have, in Experience, proved hurtful to it ; so that those who made them were obliged to repeal them ? Perhaps if all the Laws on the Subject were enumerated, it might be shewn that the greater Part are prejudicial. All the exclusive Rights of Corporations, and Monopolies of private Companies, if they were necessary or useful at the Beginning, have long ceased to be so, and yet many of them still continue. They must also probably continue for Ages yet to come : such is the Spirit of the People. He would be a bad Minister ; nay, it would be a bold Parliament, that should attempt to lay them open. There is nothing that appears to me more clear, than that the Restrictions we have laid our Sister Kingdom of Ireland under, are prejudicial to ourselves ; and yet I would not be the Man who should propose to take them off in an English House of Commons.

Have not most Laws been made to satisfy the interested Demands of particular

lar Persons, Classes and Counties? And have not the Clamour of the Mob, in favour of their supposed, been generally against their own real Interest? When the Woollen Trade was brought into this Country by People from Flanders, did not the Natives immediately cry out, that they came to eat the Bread out of their Mouths? Whereas it is now plain, they came to put it into the Mouths of them and their Posterity.

What monstrous Outcries were made against the late Peace, because the Ministry gave back to the French some of the Places we had taken from them? And yet have we not much more behind than we know what to do with, or shall know for two hundred Years, tho', contrary to all Probability, we should be reaping Benefit by them all the while. I will yield to no Subject of his Majesty in Loyalty to my Prince, or Love to my Country; and yet I sincerely wish he had given them back all that we took, and a good deal of our own besides; provided we had brought all the People to Great Britain; and obliged our Enemies to pay the real Expence of the War, that these new Subjects might be put at first into a way
of

of living. The French, had they attended to their own Interest, had as little to do to fight with us in America, as we had to fight with them in Germany; and if their Expulsion from so great a Part of it shall make them so wise, as to cultivate their own excellent Country, to fill their Land with People, and employ their People in Industry, future Historians will be able to demonstrate that they were Gainers by being beat.

However fully I am satisfy'd of the Truth of these Remarks, I have little hope that any Body of Men, even tho' they should assent to them, will have so much self government as to act steadily on the Principles to which they lead. We all agree in Speculation that a King may have too much Power, a Peerage too much Influence, a House of Commons too much Weight, and a Multitude too much Liberty, so as to overturn the very Constitution; and yet it is not to be expected that any one of them will refuse an Accession to their own Share when it is offered, or surrender it after they have obtained it.

But

But to keep close by the Subject of Commerce---How little Men in general understand the Nature of it, may be seen from this Circumstance; that many Nations have Laws still in force against the Exportation of Corn? Is not this infinitely absurd? What signifies any such Law. If we import more from any Nation than we send them, must we not pay the Ballance, or give up the Trade? I am persuaded it is scarcely possible to make any Law on the Subject of Trade, but what shall do more harm than good, excepting those which are directly intended for preventing Fraud. These are absolutely necessary and highly useful. Of the same Nature are all such Laws as tend to make our own Commodities cheap and plentiful---But those which aim only by Force or Prohibition to keep out the Commodities of other Nations, have an inherent Weakness in them, and seldom or never answer the End proposed.

There is an Assertion in some Part of
the Writings of a well known living
Author

Author (David Hume) that it is a Mistake for trading Nations to look upon one another as Rivals, or as the opposite Weights in a Ballance; so that the Exaltation of one implies of necessity the Depression of the other. He says, he is persuaded of the contrary, and that the thriving of one Nation is a Benefit, instead of an Injury, to all that are about them. The Sentiment is undoubtedly noble and generous:---And I am persuaded that it is also perfectly just and true. We may soon be satisfied of it, by going back to the Original of all Traffick, and analysing it in the following plain and simple Manner. If there was but one Man in the Earth, he would be obliged to dig the Ground for his food, and dress it for his own Use; to patch together something or another for his cloathing; to build himself some shelter from the Weather;--that is to say--to be his own Gardiner, Cook, Taylor, Mason;--and in short every Thing to himself. If there were one or two more joined with him, they would find it convenient to distribute the common Labour, and every Man to do as much of some particular Branches as to serve the whole; and

and receive of the Labour of others for what he communicated of his own. Its Society increases : the same general Plan is carried on--And one City or Nation is to another in every Respect the same, as one Man to another in a very small Number. Therefore the Radical Principle of all Commerce is this : As much as one Person, Family, City or Nation provides by its own proper Labour and Application of the common Conveniencies of human Life, more than it uses itself, it will lay up or dispose of, and keep under some instituted Sign, such as Money, and is rich just to that Degree and no more. If it provides less than it uses, no Circumstance imaginable, and least of all extensive Possessions, will prevent it from being poor.

Now let me ask, does the Industry and Activity of one Nation hinder another from working diligently? Very far from it. It rather serves to excite them by Imitation. There cannot be the least Interference but when they are both employed in producing Commodities of the same Kind; and then to be sure upon the Supposition of equal natural

Advantages, the most sober and diligent People will send them to Market cheapest, and carry away the Trade. But it is in vain to complain in this Case. The Remedy is only in ourselves: and the Commodities of Life are so various and innumerable, that every Country affords Opportunities to its Inhabitants of securing their own Prosperity, and contributing to that of the whole Earth. The only proper and just, and indeed the only effectual Way, of one Nation out-stripping another is by out working them. When instead of this, we only endeavour to hinder them from working, or to destroy them, it seems to be little less absurd than the Measure of the Savage, who meeting a Man wiser than himself, put him to Death, that he might plunder him of his Wisdom.

Nothing appears to me more ridiculous and pusillanimous than what we meet with almost every Day in our News-papers, since the late Peace. If any French Ships are seen at Sea, immediately the Alarm is sounded, and the Ruin of Britain is at hand. *Capt. ——— in his Passage met with ——— French Ships*
in

in——Latitude, and they seemed to be steering their Course for the Gulf of Darien, where, if they effect a Settlement they will carry away the whole Riches of South-America.——Great Preparations are making by the French for fishing this Season on the Banks of Newfoundland; and it is thought they will have more Ships in that Trade than ever they had before.——The French seem resolved to establish a Settlement and Forts on some Parts of the African Coast, and if they do, they will ingross the whole Negro Trade entirely to themselves. When I read such Reflections as these, I sigh, and say to myself, Oh, my poor Country! Is there no Way of preserving thee from Destruction but by depriving the whole French Nation of their Senses? If this is the Case, why should we mince the matter? Let us aim a Blow at the Root. Let us rise as one Man, pass the Straits of Dover, and without staying to demolish Dunkirk, let us drive them all before us, young and old, Male and Female, and drown them in the Mediterranean Sea.

If this Discourse had not been drawn out to a greater Length than I intended,

it might have been proper to have considered a little how the Matter has appeared in Fact. Every Person acquainted with History must acknowledge, that the Places in antient Times, remarkable for Trade, had but small Territories. Tyre had a very limited Territory. I cannot be precise as to its Extent, but am certain it was not greater than two or three Shires in England. Carthage, the Daughter of Tyre, had but little Room for several Ages; but growing rich and powerful by Commerce, she attempted to extend her Conquests, and by doing so, brought on her own Destruction. At this present Time, excepting France and England, the other Places in Europewhere Trade flourishes, have but very narrow Limits. The Dutch, who as a Nation have deviated as little from the Maxims of sound Policy as any People on Earth, do not seem at all covetous of much Ground, or many distant Settlements; yet they are the richest People in Europe, and for their Numbers the strongest; just because these Numbers are inclosed in so narrow Bounds. They have indeed very valuable Settlements

ments in the East Indies, from this single Circumstance, that they ingross the Spice Trade. But whatever it be to them, it seems to be granted by all who understand the Subject, that the East-India Trade is hurtful to the rest of Europe.

I fancy to myself that some of my Mercantile Readers will have long ago perceived that I am no Merchant, and therefore will be saying within themselves in the most contemptuous Manner, What has this Author to do with Trade? How can he take upon him to write upon a Subject he does not understand? I am sure if I was a Merchant, I should reckon myself utterly unqualified for speaking on the Question which stands at the Head of my Paper. Actual Merchants are so ingrossed by the Gain or Loss of their own particular Branches, that it is impossible for them to perceive the Hurt or Benefit of the whole Body. These proceed upon general principles, on which any Man of common Understanding may write clearly, and those who are not Traders themselves must be supposed to judge with the greatest

greatest Impartiality. A Man who is in the Middle of a Crowd, will not perceive so distinctly, half what is doing in five different Parts of it, or whither the whole is tending, as he who is removed at a little distance from it, and by his Situation above it. I remember Dr. Burnet says somewhere, that when the new-modelling the Government at the Revolution was upon the Tapis, of all who wrote or spoke on that Subject, none were so much bewilder'd as the Lawyers. He seems to be surpriz'd at this. But it was no Wonder at all. For Lawyers were so accustomed to think of the Force of particular Statutes, that they were every now and then saying, that such and such Measures were against Law: Than which nothing could be more ridiculous. For what signified all former Laws, when the Government was to be resettled from the very Foundation. It was easy to see, that if the Revolutioners were able to keep their Ground, they would justify themselves: Whereas if the banish'd Prince had recover'd Possession, he would have hanged as many as he pleased of his Opposers, though
they

they had never broke a Law in their Lives, any otherwise than by sending him away.

To draw towards a Conclusion : I am desirous of having the Question examin'd with Care; and whether this insatiable Desire in our Nation of such extensive Territories, as must be measured by the Heavens, and probably never will be perambulated, be not like all selfish interested Affections in Individuals, Destruction to ourselves. If my Fears are quite groundless, so much the better for us and our Posterity: If otherwise, it were to be wish'd that the best Means were pointed out for retarding our Ruin as much as possible.

If any have been so far moved by what I have said as to wish me to proceed in mentioning these Means; I answer, let us be well convinced that the Danger is real, before we come to Particulars. In general however, the Remedies must be of the same Nature as are prescribed by Physicians, when the Patient is under a bad Habit, without
any

any acute Disorder, that is to say, slow and alterative, but radical and fundamental. They must be such as have an Influence upon the Principles and Manners of the People, and the Cultivation of the Soil. The first is chiefly necessary, and will produce the other as its Effect. Yet Agriculture ought to be the Object of immediate Attention, as it will promote Health and Sobriety among those who are employed in it; Numbers of People to fill the Cities, and abundance of Provision for their daily Support. It is demonstrable that all our great Cities are supplied with Inhabitants from the Country, and therefore whatever tends to the depopulating of the distant Parts, will in the End prove Destruction not only to themselves, but the whole.

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